316 Later on wrecked boats provided Native smiths with iron to make
325 hoes, axes, etc. In certain villages there were regular forges,
412 (Matlharin, near Mbengelen Island, Matjolo etc.). The hoes
436 were in the well-known form of an ace of spades and were fixed into a wooden handle, as are also the axes, and battle axes (I. p. 453). But the principal supply of iron came from the Transvaal Mountains, especially from the Northern Zoutpansberg, where the Bveshas have practised the art of mining iron ore for an unknown period. These Sutho hoes have played a great part in the history of the Thonga tribe, having been extensively used as currency for lobolo purposes.

325 These Bveshas — the word is said to be a Thonga corruption of Venda — built their furnaces in ant-hills, as shown in the accompanying illustration supplied by M. H. Gros, near Iron Mountain, East of the Spelonken district. They excavated three holes under the furnace, and blew into them by means of bellows made of a skin, the air being expelled through an antelope horn. The ore, broken in small pieces and mixed with charcoal, was smelted, crushed, smelted a second time, crushed again and made into hoes and axes, etc. Who had taught the Vendas this art? Did they learn it from the Ma-Lemba, that curious tribe, half Semitic in its customs, which invaded the Northern Transvaal during the XVIIIth century? Nobody knows for certain. I am under the impression that this art is older than that, as the Lebombo Natives, who invaded the Nondwane in the XVIth century, seem to have possessed iron weapons. The origin of iron and the date of its introduction into South Africa is still a mystery.

326 Among the ornaments illustrated will be found a very pretty belt (No. 1).[1] It is the work of a young man named Philemon, living in the outskirts of Lourenço Marques, who employed his leisure moments in making objects of this description with twisted wires of iron, brass and copper, bent in festoons and [177] fastened with small tongues of metal. European influence is doubtless very marked in these belts, but still they possess a certain cachet of their own. Amongst the Zulus as in our tribe, large cups of various descriptions, including egg-cups, are

[1] [p. 101 -- Analyst]

326 manufactured, and it is evident that, in this branch, Native art is capable of considerable development. Their method of fastening the blades of assagais to the handles with iron wire is also very ingenious. Sometimes they cover their ebony sticks from top to bottom with a delicate network of steel and brass wire. A Native expert in wire work once mended the stock of my sporting [439] gun, which was broken, and made a wonderful job of it. This wire, so extensively used for bracelets, was formerly made by Native blacksmiths, but now they buy it at Lourenço Marques or from the Hindu traders.

D. COMMERCE.

437 Thongas have an inborn inclination for trade and have always been addicted to it. Before there was question of any currency, when hoes were not yet procurable, or the *ritlatla* bracelet brought by the Whites (I. p. 385), or the copper stick called *lirale* (1) melted by the Palaora Ba-Sutho, they knew how to buy (shaba) and to sell (shabisa), viz., to exchange their primitive produce. A mat was bartered for a fowl and the thrifty savage thought: "This is good business; the hen will lay eggs and hatch chickens and this will bring me a profit (bindjula)." A shihundju basket was also exchanged for a hen. Another way of buying was adopted when dealing with pots; the pot was filled with mealies by the buyer and the contents left to the potter as corresponding to the value of the pot. For monkey-nuts, not husked, the pot had to be filled twice; for more precious products, such as sorghum and Kafir corn, half of it only was measured out. I have myself witnessed some transactions of this kind amongst the Nkunas. If the pot broke when first used, the potter had to give another in its place.

439 But this primitive trade became much more extensive when the Whites made their appearance. Delagoa Bay was one of the

(1) Compare my article in *Folklore*, 24 June 1903.